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SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE MEDIA REACTION TO POTUS CAIRO SPEECH

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¶1. One week after the President's "A New Beginning" speech to the Muslim world from Cairo, Mozambican press is still digesting his words and the implications for Muslims and U.S. policy. While all coverage has been positive, praising the President for his boldness, his eloquence and his depth of knowledge and understanding about Islam, some have questioned if those views embody popular sentiment among Americans, and many have urged that the words must be turned into tangible action to really make a difference. "The situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable" was the most oft-repeated and analyzed line, with new expectations here that the President may be able to bring a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

¶2. The following summarizes significant press reports in the Mozambican media over the past week (See reftel for post's 6/4 event, Pol Officer's participation on "TIM" TV and initial reactions from Mozambicans.):

--"The Speech of Barack Hussein Obama" editorial
Independent weekly Zambeze, distribution 20,000, ran a 6/11 editorial by National Islamic Council head Sheikh Aminnudin Mohamad.

Mohamad lauded the President's speech as truly a new beginning -- the first time a U.S. President has publicly opened up to the Muslim world. He praised the illuminating line, "It was Islam...paving the way for Europe's Renaissance" but warned that the U.S. must turn the speech into action or the speech will end up "like a tree that bears no fruit." Mohamad also pleaded for U.S. help to create lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

--"An Important Signal In the Construction of a New World Order"
editorial
Near-national daily independent "O Pais", distribution 15,000, ran a 6/10 editorial by senior Mozambican professor Carlos Serra calling on readers to fight for a new world order as per what President Obama outlined in his speech. Serra appreciated the President's modesty and admission of past wrongdoings in relations with the Muslim world and with Iran. Serra also deliberated heavily on what the speech will mean for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

--Leading independent TV station "STV" (viewers up to 1 million) dedicated a part of its popular weekly Sunday evening talk show "Points of View" on 6/7 to the speech. The panelists, representatives from Mozambique's political parties, urged that "everybody now needs to practice what Obama preaches" and discussed the President's call for democracy in the Middle East.

--"Obama Reinforces Support for a Palestinian State" headline
National daily state newspaper "Noticias", distribution 20,000, ran 6/5 story quoting the President on "The current situation of Palestinians is intolerable"; also reported with admiration that "President Obama called for the end of Israeli settlements."

--"Obama Makes a Surprising Speech" headline
"O Pais" ran front-page story and two notable editorials on 6/5:
"The Remarkable Speech of Barack Obama" editorial by respected

editor (and former IV) Jeremias Langa stated that "President Obama showed remarkable courage to deliver this speech that broke the ice; and he proved irrefutably that he is truly a different kind of leader."

"The West and Islam: From Conflict to Reconciliation - the Important Role of Barack Obama"

Leading Islamic and often anti-USG scholar Abdula Manafi Mutualo praised the President's speech and opined: "The fact that President Obama did not visit Israel on this trip shows that Obama is turning around the negotiating tables."

--"STV" aired excerpts from the speech on its 6/4 evening prime time news with an invited panelist to comment. Dr. Aly Jamal, international relations professor, well-known public commentator, and former Fulbrighter, stated, "Never in the 61 years since Israel was created as a state, has a U.S. President or any leader spoken in such a clear manner and laid out to both sides what is expected from them for lasting peace; the speech was a landmark."

¶3. Comment: Even with a significant (20 - 40 percent) Muslim population in Mozambique, Muslim issues are not often well represented in the press. Nevertheless, the President's Cairo speech garnered wide and important analytical attention in the Mozambican media - not just because of the President's popularity but also because of prevailing interest in Middle East issues. Mozambicans tend to view the Israel-Palestine conflict not as a religious question but rather one of human rights and justice, issues that resonate deeply with Mozambicans.

CHAPMAN